

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE 26 JANUARY 2021

SUBJECT: Residents Satisfaction Survey Working Party

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DATE: 14 January 2021

EXTN: 37580

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Overview Select Committee on 6 October 2021 OSC was presented with the 2020 Residents Satisfaction Survey Report. Following the debate, a Member Working Party was established to review the method used for carrying out the survey and in particular how a wider response rate could be achieved. This paper sets out the background to the survey, the issues discussed by the Working Party and recommendations to OSC on 26 January 2021.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the Council carries out its 2021 Residents Satisfaction Survey using methods identified by the Working Party to improve participation across age groups, which can be implemented within budget, these are:
 - a) Increase number of surveys, potentially offsetting this cost by not sending out follow up letters, numbers to be determined with the survey provider
 - b) Carry out an open online survey alongside the targeted survey
 - c) Explore options for incentives for survey completion to be vouchers for local businesses
 - d) Explore options for invitations to participate being sent in a more appealing format.
 - e) Carry out an additional sample geographically targeted survey to target younger respondents
2. That delegated authority be given to the Group Head of Policy to work with our chosen provider to deliver the most representative survey for 2021, within existing budgets based on the recommendations of the Residents Satisfaction Survey Working Party and in consultation with the Chairman of the Working Party
3. That the effectiveness of the changed methodology be reviewed in the 2021 survey report and developed for future years

BACKGROUND:

1. Arun District Council has a number of corporate and service level performance indicators. Performance against these indicators is reported to Overview Select Committee (OSC) and Cabinet every 6 months and at the year end.
2. The Residents Satisfaction Survey is carried out on an annual basis in order to measure two of Arun's Corporate Plan Indicators:
 - CP1 - The level of public satisfied or very satisfied with the overall quality of the Council's services
 - CP3 - The level of customer satisfaction with the cleanliness of the District
3. At its meeting on 6 October 2020 OSC was presented with the 2020 survey and the outcome report and asked to note the contents. There was an interesting debate on this and a number of suggestions were made. In particular, Members felt that simply posting the survey was an outdated approach and the ability to have the survey completed online would potentially reach a wider audience. It was felt that this option should be researched and considered in time for the next survey in 2021. It was commented that it was important to continue with the hard copy survey via post when considering the online approach as this would potentially stop a proportion of residents who do not have access to online facilities from taking part.
4. The Committee concluded that a Working Party (held in private) should be established and that the membership of this Working Party would be Councillors Mrs Cooper, Dendle and Tilbrook.
5. Informal discussions with members were held on 17 November and 21 December to consider the brief and take this forward so that a meeting of the Residents Satisfaction Working Party could be held in advance of the OSC meeting in January 2021. This would allow time for any changes to the survey process to be implemented for 2021.
6. Links to the most recent survey and report are attached as background papers.

Current Survey Methodology

7. Using the Royal Mail's Postal Address File (the most complete source of residential addresses available), 1,800 addresses were selected at random across the district to receive a short questionnaire by post. This questionnaire included details of how the survey could be completed online. The distribution of the selected addresses was checked against ward population data to ensure that the sample selection was spatially representative. Mid way through the survey period, any address that had not returned a survey to BMG Research was sent a reminder letter and a fresh version of the questionnaire in order to maximise the response rate. Overall, 611 questionnaires were completed and returned to BMG, representing a total response rate of 34%. This compared to a 32% response rate recorded in the equivalent residents' survey completed in 2019.

8. It should be noted that direct e-mail contact with named residents is not a possible as any e-mail addresses we hold were not collected for the purpose of carrying out a survey under GDPR.
9. The data collected has been subsequently weighted by area and, within each area, by age and gender. The exact profile of the data prior to weighting and after weighting can be reviewed in the profile summary at the end of the BMG Report.
10. The data in the report is benchmarked against the Local Government Association's (LGA) national public polling on resident satisfaction with local councils. Although there is a difference in methodology, the LGA Survey is carried out by telephone, it is considered important that the local survey can be compared with national benchmarks.

Age Profile of Participants

11. One of the key concerns expressed by OSC about the outcomes was the age profile of those participating in the Survey (shown in section 4 of the survey report). This indicates that over 50% of the participants were in the 65+ age category, retired and own their property outright. Whilst this can be adjusted to give a fair representation statistically of age profiles across the District, it clearly indicates that the survey is either not reaching or is not of interest to many younger residents within the District, particularly those aged 25 – 44 who are also likely to be those with younger children. The 18 – 24 category is very under represented and it is likely that we need a very different approach to reach these members of the community. The profile of respondents is clearly more complicated than just age but given the limited time available before the 2021 survey needs to be done, age is being used as a start point for changes in 2021.

Age	Unweighted	Weighted
18-24	<0.5%	2%
25 -34	3%	16%
35 -44	8%	12%
45 -54	14%	16%
55 -64	18%	15%
65+	53%	33%
Prefer not to say	2%	4%
Not provided	<0.5%	1%

Additional Survey Methods

12. A number of options were discussed with our current survey provider, in summary they are:
 - Telephone interviews
 - Increase size of survey in terms of circulation
 - Increase size of survey in terms of number of questions
 - Target more surveys in areas with more young people/families

- Send invitation to participate in a more appealing format rather than a standard letter asking people to complete the survey online
- Make survey available to anyone
- Use of Social Media and website to encourage participation
- Should the survey questions be the same for 2021

13. The Working Party discussed the options taking into account a number of issues and their conclusions are set out below:

- Priority age group that should be targeted to increase responses
Since the prime purpose of the survey is to find out what local residents think of Arun District Council services it was decided that the age group to be targeted is residents aged 25-44 as this is the group currently most under-represented in the survey responses
- Number of questions
It was concluded that the questions should remain the same for 2021 to enable full comparability with previous surveys, given that the Corporate Plan Period runs from 2018-2022 and it is likely that the survey will be changed following this; to allow comparison with the national local government survey; to enable changes in methodology within budget as any increases to the length of the survey will cost more and limit this. The Working Party did comment that there may be a need for more targeted surveys corporately and at service level to better understand our community and improve engagement in the future.
- Which media is most likely to appeal to younger residents
There was agreement that the survey is not attractive or eye catching and that this needs to go out in a better physical format (colour, postcard sized flyers as follow up etc.). Social media and the website should be used to promote the survey, but it was recognised that social media is most likely to promote completion of an open survey (see below).
- The need to continue to provide access to a survey for residents whose preferred method of engagement is not digital
Agreed that this is very important
- Use of an open survey
This means that the same survey that is sent to targeted households is made available via a link on the Arun website. Such an open survey would need to be analysed separately as we would not be able to control for other issues such as duplicates, multiple people from the same household, people who are not residents of Arun, use of the survey for campaigning etc. We will not be able to combine this information with the targeting survey in a meaningful way, but it will be additional information which can be reported separately and will help us to structure future surveys.

- Benefits of a geographically targeted survey
Additional surveys could target areas with younger populations as identified by Arun. As in the previous point this would sit alongside the main survey. For the open survey this could also be done using Facebook and the relatively new 'Nextdoor' platform which Arun has just joined, but this would need to be managed and would be at additional cost.
- Increase number of surveys sent out
There will be a cost to this, but this could be offset by not sending out the postal reminders. Only a small percentage of surveys were returned following reminders last year.

2. PROPOSAL(S):

- a) A number of proposals were made:
- Increase number of surveys, potentially offsetting this cost by not sending out follow up letters, numbers to be determined with the survey provider
 - Carry out an open online survey alongside the targeted survey
 - Explore options for incentives for survey completion to be vouchers for local businesses
 - Explore options for invitations to participate being sent in a more appealing format.
 - Carry out an additional sample geographically targeted survey to target younger respondents
- b) The Working Party was very aware of the need to balance improved participation of younger households in the survey with current financial constraints and the need to stay within budget. Budgets were discussed at the Working Party but have not been set out in this paper as while indicative costs are available, further quotations will be required and proposals may need to be prioritised.

3. OPTIONS:

- a) To make changes to the survey methodology as recommended
- b) To carry out the survey using existing methodology

4. CONSULTATION:

Has consultation been undertaken with:	YES	NO
Relevant Town/Parish Council		x
Relevant District Ward Councillors		x
Other groups/persons (please specify)		x

5. ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES: (Explain in more detail at 6 below)	YES	NO
Financial		x

Legal		X
Human Rights/Equality Impact Assessment		X
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act		X
Sustainability		X
Asset Management/Property/Land		X
Technology		X
Safeguarding		X
Other (please explain)		X
6. IMPLICATIONS:		

7. REASON FOR THE DECISION:
 To improve the response rate amongst younger households for the annual Residents Satisfaction Survey

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

[Item 5 - Final - OSC Report Q2 Performance 20.10.20.docx \[docx\] 33KB](#)

[Item 5 - Final - Appendix A - Q2 Corporate Plan indicators.pdf \[pdf\] 391KB](#)

[Item 5 - Final - Appendix B - Q2 SDP indicators.pdf \[pdf\] 399KB](#)